

NOV 22 1964

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SOVIET WRITERS ON CULTURE TRIP

3-Week Private Visit Here Omits Usual Formalities

By MURRAY SEEGER

Without the restrictions of official security and protocol, a delegation of Soviet literary figures is moving through New York's cultural world.

The six visitors arrived in New York Tuesday and will stay for three weeks at the invitation of Dr. Harold Taylor, former president of Sarah Lawrence College.

Instead of being steered as a group quickly through one city after another by guides, they have been split up to live in five New York homes.

Students and teachers from local colleges and universities are serving as interpreters.

The United States Government approved the trip but has had nothing official to do with it since issuing the visas through the embassy in Moscow.

The Soviet Government has labeled the visit an enterprise of the "private" Institute of Soviet-American Relations.

Changes in Soviet Discussed

According to specialists on Soviet affairs, the most "interesting" of the visitors is a young, dark-haired poet who is big enough to be a guard for the New York Giants, and the most "important" is a middle-aged, baldish editor who could be the younger man's coach.

Both men, Robert I. Rozhdestvensky, the poet, and Aleksandr B. Chakovsky, the editor, talked freely about their work and the changes taking place in the Soviet Union.

The other visitors are Aleksei N. Arbuzov, a playwright; Yevgeny D. Surkov, a theater critic; Mrs. Tamara Y. Mamadova, director of the Institute

of Soviet-American Relations, and Mrs. Chakovsky.

Mr. Chakovsky, who is 51, is editor of Literaturnaya Gazeta, the newspaper of the Soviet Writers' Union. He shrugged and showed surprise when asked whether he was in any danger of losing his post as did the editors of Pravda and Izvestia after the ouster of Nikita S. Khrushchev in October.

"I don't think so; I don't see any reason why," he said in good English.

Mr. Chakovsky said it was "premature" to say whether there would be any change in the Soviet Government's policies toward writers as a result of the removal of Mr. Khrushchev.

"Policies in literature are not made by one individual," Mr. Chakovsky said. "In the days of Stalin if he didn't like something that was written, the writer was finished, so." He emphasized the point by bringing his open right hand across his left.

Writers Defied Criticism

As he moved into this sensitive subject Mr. Chakovsky switched to Russian for translation by Grant Pendill Jr. of Philadelphia, secretary-treasurer of Arms of Friendship, Inc., a group that promotes better relations with the Soviet Union.

"You must understand," Mr. Chakovsky said. "Under Khrushchev, that was no longer possible. People were criticized but they went right on writing."

"When it was a question of expression in literature, I agreed with some of Khrushchev's criticisms. But sometimes he was too personal in his attacks."

At that point, Mr. Rozhdestvensky interrupted in Russian: "That affected me, personally."

He went on to explain that some of his poetry had been criticized by the former Premier but that he had continued to write.

"Anything I write is published," Mr. Rozhdestvensky said. "Some of the things are

praised and some are criticized, but I have absolute freedom."

At 32, Mr. Rozhdestvensky is one of the most popular writers in the Soviet Union, ranking with Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko as spokesmen for the younger generation.

He said that Mr. Yevtushenko, who was rumored to be under pressure from the Government because of some of his work, has just finished a long poem, "too long," of 5,000 words.

"Life is a multivariety thing," Mr. Rozhdestvensky said in Russian. "I don't understand poets that write in only one style. The great variety of life should be shown in poetry."

Asked if the poet had a special role in explaining the many changes going on in the Soviet Union, he paused before answering.

"We have a tremendous role right now," he said in his deep voice. "You are right—there are

great changes in literature and all phases of life. And interest has not diminished. The halls are filled with listeners. I do not want to boast about myself, but my last poem was published in 100,000 copies."

Comparison of Impressions

The poet said he had wanted to return to the United States to compare impressions with those of his visit a year ago. The assassination of President Kennedy clouded that visit he added.

"I like to say that what the Soviet Union is going through is a 'continued democratization of our country,'" Mr. Chakovsky said. "Not democracy as you see it, but a more human expression of our system."

"What we have now in Russia is a completely collective leadership. We are in a struggle of ideology. But in that struggle it is most important that Russia and America maintain the best relations."